

Battle of White Sulphur

There were more than 300 men dead or wounded lying in the fields beside the James River & Kanawha turnpike a mile and a half east of White Sulphur Springs in the evening of Aug. 28, 1863. In a small house at the junction of the Anthony's Creek road the wounded lay moaning along the fences and in the yard, awaiting their turn on the crude operating table in the front room. Heart-rending screams arose as the surgeons saws bit into bones and the attendants strained to hold the victims as they underwent amputations without anaesthetics. The arms and legs were tossed through an open window and the pile grew above the window sill. The wounded wore blue and grey uniforms in which crept swarms of vermin. The summer sun as it descended was like a blast furnace in its intense heat.

The battle fought in that little valley east of the famous Springs has three names in history: the battle of Dry Creek, Rocky Gap, and the battle of White Sulphur Springs. It had lasted two days. The result showed that rank meant nothing, for a West Point trained brigadier general had been defeated by an ex-lawyer from Charleston, W. Va. The dashing Union officer was now fleeing northward with his beaten troopers and the grave, courtly George S. Patton, dressed in his long grey coat with the gold braid on his sleeves, was in hot pursuit along the road to the Virginia border.

The battle of White Sulphur Springs was the outcome of an attempted raid by Federal troops to cut the Virginia & Tennessee railroad and divide the Confederacy. The railroad ran from Staunton to Tennessee and to destroy the road was to destroy the Southern cause. The Union officers to make the raid was Brig. Gen. W. A. Averill, a veteran military officer. He commanded the 2nd, 3rd, and 8th Pennsylvania cavalry, the 14th Pennsylvania infantry and the 1st West Virginia horse artillery and Calkins' battalion, all mounted. The whole outfit was designed for fast movement

into enemy territory and to strike quickly and retreat.

Gen. Averill came riding down through Marlinton towards Covington, hoping to cut the railroad near that place. But he met a Confederate force under Gen. W. E. Jones that threw the Yankees off balance and the commander decided to turn right into Pocahontas and Greenbrier, reach the present Seneca Trail at Lewisburg, and dash through Monroe county to the railroad objective near Dublin, Va. The plan seemed to be working successfully. The hard-riding troopers hit the old James river & Kanawha turnpike and pounded west toward the famous Old White Springs. The Union column was four miles long, with wagon train and artillery. The Summer dust arose from the galloping cavalry and settled on the peaceful fields and woodland. The bugles rang clear and the guidons and flags flashed gaily as the column approached the springs which might soon go up in smoke to the torch of the invader.

Down in Monroe county at Union, was Echols' brigade of rebel infantry some 3,000 strong, commanded by Col. George S. Patton, who had, three years before, practiced law from his office on Capitol street near Kanawha street. His command was composed of men from this region and in fighting for their native soil were as gentle as wildcats.

Learning of the rapid approach of the Yankee raiders, Patton made a forced march toward White Sulphur Springs and reached the Anthony's Creek road that joined the James & Kanawha pike just east of the Springs. Down this road went the ragged rebels at the double quick, racing to reach the turnpike before the Yankees arrived. As remarked before, it was a very hot day and the soldiers suffered from thirst as well as fatigue. But they made the forks of the road just as the skirmishers of the Federal column came in sight.

Working swiftly, the rebels spread out over the little valley which was

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about one mile long, and tore down rail fences and made a barricade extending from one hill to another and across the turnpike. Behind this they formed and waited. Their artillery was posted on a small hillside.

As the Yankee column burst out into the valley along the turnpike the rebel shells hit them. Capt. Paul, the Baron von Koenig, aide to Gen. Averill, was killed and his advance guard recoiled back up the road. There was some disorder before Gen. Averill came to the front.

The Federals had advanced down a sort of gorge, as any motorist knows who have passed over the road east of White Sulphur. The road was narrow and hills on each side. The column, four miles long, was in a veritable trap. It must advance or retreat. The dashing Union officer, Averill, decided to fight. Dismounting his troops he began the battle that lasted two days and cost so many lives.

Behind the rail fence the rebels stood, biting their cartridges and aiming at the belt buckles of the blue soldiers. They came in cavalry charges, riding almost up to the rail fence, but always swept back by blasts of musket fire and the shock of cannon fire. Over and over, through the cornfield, came the waves of Yankees but to no avail. The ragged, bearded, rebels stood, shooting to kill.

Across that field in the little valley that August day of 1863 men charged and charged across the field, only to

fall and die before the rail fence. The frustrated Gen. Averill kept ordering those deadly cavalry charges that only laid his men in rows beside their stricken horses. The few houses on the smoky field were hit or set on fire by cannons. There wasn't a drop of water in canteens and men chewed bullets to get moisture for their parched mouths. Still the Confederates under the brave Patton, loaded and fired until the night came and the battle ceased.

When morning came the Federals attacked again in waves across the cornfield. The rebels were there, firing in volleys through the rail fence. The cannons roared and smoke half obscured the field. It was near 4 o'clock of the second day when Gen. Averill ordered his last charge. He put two men on a horse and sent the charge roaring toward the rebel barricade. The charge halted and withered under the blast of bullets. Averill knew he had lost the fight.

As nightfall came the Yankee Gen. Averill began his retreat out of his White Sulphur trap. It wasn't easy. He had his column in a narrow road. He had to turn his wagontrains, remount his troops, keep up a rear guard action, and back off toward Covington. He was a good general and he accomplished this difficult job. While the rebels stood behind the rail fence waiting, the Yankee raiders retreated in the night and fled northward, a defeated army. He left his dead and wounded to be buried and treated by

the rebels. Averill had hoped all that hot day to get help from Federal troops stationed in Kanawha valley. They never came.

Averill left behind him Capt. Pollock who with his company, lay asleep and took no part in the battle. They were captured by the Rebs. Capt. James Billingsly was too drunk to retreat and was arrested and carried in a wagon to Beverly where he was court martialed.

Capt. Billingsly, full of corn liquor, had decided early in the fight that he was better off drunk than to die in the cornfield before that rail fence. He lay down and slept through the hot conflict. Capt. Pollock and his company had the same idea and fell into the hands of the Confederates.

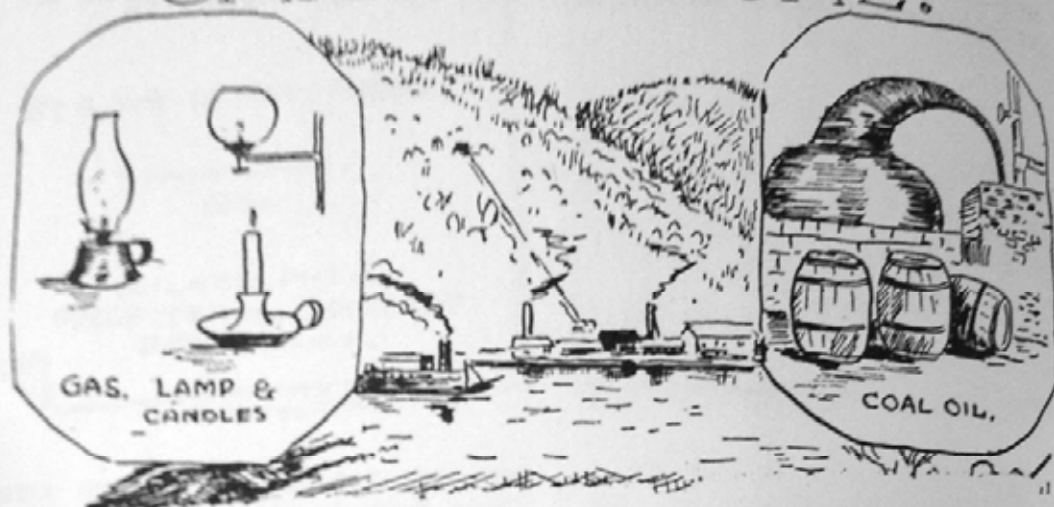
Col. Patton, commander of the Confederate soldiers at the rail fence, is well remembered in local history. He had certain old fashioned ideas of

chivalry and bravery that caused his soldiers to refer to him as "the gallant" Patton. He was killed at Winchester, Va., near the close of the war. He was handsome, brave, and was long remembered in Charleston, his adopted town.

In the late Second World War there was some mention of a George S. Patton, commander of the tank battalions in France. His men called him "Old Blood and Guts." This George Patton was the grandson of the rebel officer who stood at that rail fence at White Sulphur Springs. This first Col. Patton rode no tank but a horse and his voice, as many a veteran remembered, arose above the keen whine of minie bullets as he cheered his dirty veterans with his cry: "Don't let the Yankees pass, men!"

All this was 90 years ago, come this August. Just local history of an old war but worth remembering by all Americans.

CANNEL COAL.



On a fall day in 1848, Ben Burnett was timbering high up on Cannelton mountain for Col. Aaron Stockton. He sent a log down a dirt chute and won a passel of money for his employer, a home for the rest of his life and made of his name a mild cuss word, "Dad Burnett!"

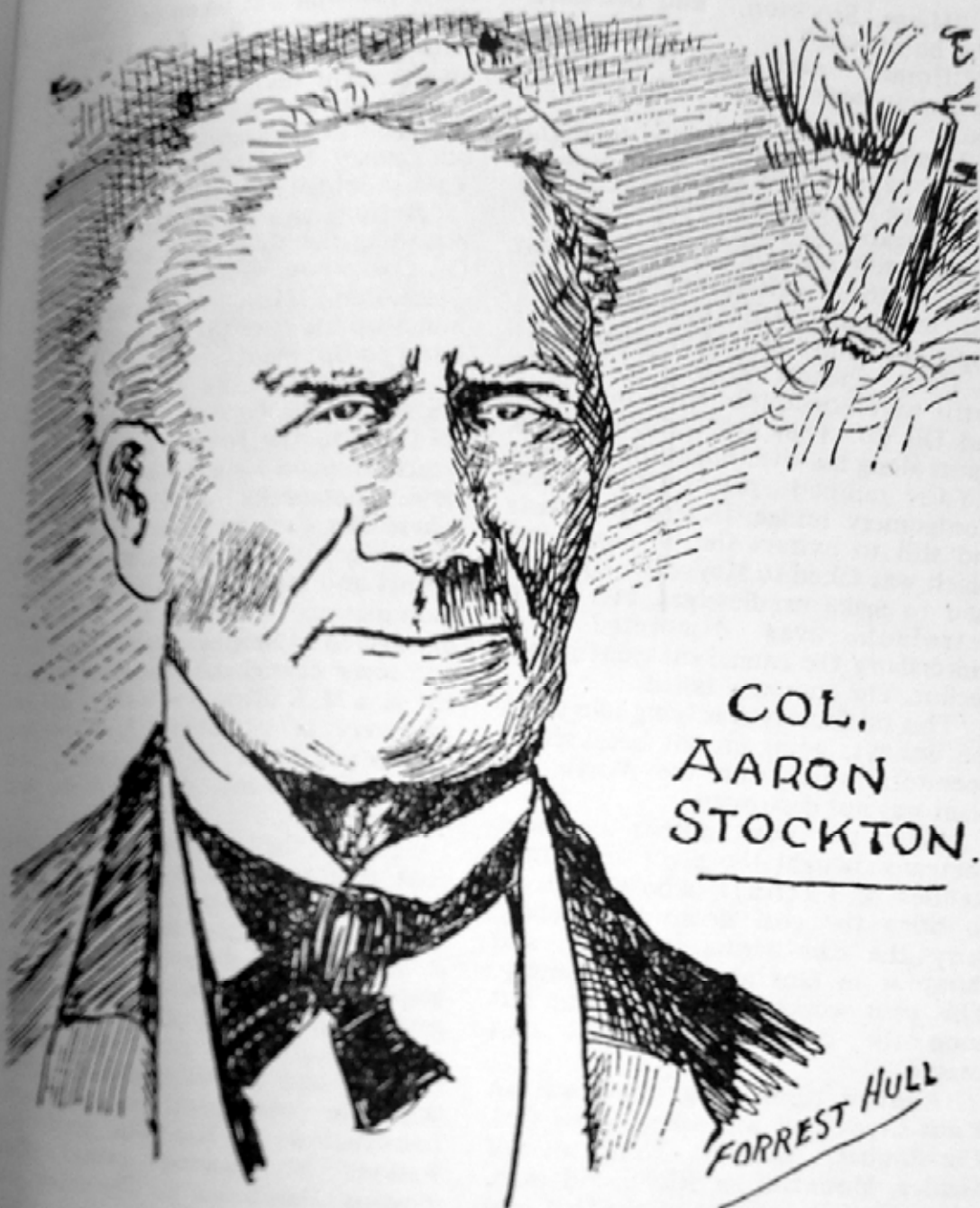
Not that anyone wanted to "cuss" Uncle Ben. His name just fitted into Kanawha county vocabularies like "Dog gone it," "Dod rot it," and "Dad blast it," gentle expletives that women folk could use and still be ladylike. The name of Uncle Ben is often heard today when a man smashes his finger with the hammer and ladies are about, "Dad Burnett!"

Aaron Stockton, owner of the land opposite Montgomery, felt like saying, "Bless Dad Burnett!" for the log Ben sent scooting down the steep mountain side tore out a hole and uncovered the finest seam of cannel coal ever discovered in this region. He fell upon Ben's neck and declared the old fellow would have a home, rent free, as long as he lived.

Now cannel coal is peculiar stuff. It is doubtful if one mine in a hundred ever saw any of it for cannel coal mining ceased at least 50 years ago. It

is a flinty, slaty looking coal that many a picker on a coal tippie would throw aside. But take a piece between the fingers and apply a lighted match and the coal will burst into flames and drip a heavy oil like a candle. By a simple process the oil can be extracted, and was during the early days, to make candles, to light lamps, and to make city artificial gas. So Mr. Stockton's joy can be understood.

Uncle Ben Burnett fades from the story here and Aaron Stockton takes over. Stockton began mining the stuff and sledding it down the hillside on brush sleds, chutes, and later by wooden sluices. But this made waste. He built an incline with four small wagons that ran on wood rails with a drum that took two cars up and two loaded cars down. Stockton, who had long built salt boats for the furnaces at Malden, used them to take his cannel coal to the salt works. The furnaces were using coal by now, but this cannel stuff burned the fireboxes up in a jiffy. Stockton took a load to Cincinnati and found that it was needed to make oil for lamps, candles and many other things. But Col. Stockton needed money. He was no coal operator but a land promoter and gambler, and he



COL.
AARON
STOCKTON.

FORREST HULL

found a buyer for his famous coal
was. Col. Aaron, at his life history
shows, was one leading citizen of the
valley who had a good time all his life.
And he was liked and respected by all.
But he couldn't hold on to wealth.

Aaron Stockton came to Kanawha
with a younger man, William
Tompkins, about 1815. Tompkins
went into the salt business and
Stockton married his sister. Stockton
bought land everywhere and once
owned all the land on which the towns
of Cedar Grove and Longport and Falls
view now stand. Stockton built a
mansion at the Falls, and a tavern. He
died so soon so he was rich, and sold

salt for Tompkins, going as far south as
New Orleans. His old expense accounts
are extant. He loved the river
steamboats and was not averse to
holding cards with river gamblers if it
provided fun. He owned many slaves
whom he treated, people said, too
leniently.

Once a favorite house slave ran off
from the home at Falls View and
worked at the salt furnaces. He soon
grew tired and sneaked home. He was
huddled in the kitchen begging for
breakfast when the old sport, Aaron,
entered to fix his morning julp. He
saw but ignored the slave.

"Marse, Stockton," said the slave.
"I'se home, sah."
"Home?" said Stockton. "Why, have you been away? Never missed you."

Legend says that this so hurt the Negro that he cried. Stockton ordered that he be fed and never mentioned the matter again.

Stockton sold out his cannel coal mine to the Finch Brothers in 1852. This company built inclines and a tippie but soon failed. The mines went to Coon, Pickett & Co., a Yankee outfit which organized the Union Coal and Oil Co. They built large refining plants along the river where the present N.Y.C. railroad passes under the Montgomery bridge. Here were retorts and stills to extract the oil from coal which was taken to Maysville, Ky., and used to make candles, gas, etc. When petroleum was discovered near Parkersburg the cannel oil went into a decline. The company failed.

This oil factory was lying idle when the war was going on but because the operators were from the North the plant was not destroyed.

After the war another northern company bought the plant and mine, Remsen & Tatnall, who undertook to bring the coal down the incline, ferry the cars across the river, and dump it in bins above Montgomery. This plan worked for some time but soon the demand for cannel coal ceased.

Another cannel coal mine was on Paint Creek and was operated by Col. Christopher. Quarles Tompkins of Gauley Mountain, a Richmond man, who was the president of the first coal operators' association in Kanawha. He presided over a meeting in 1855, with W. T. Rosecrans, Dr. English, Nick Fitzhugh, et al. present. Tompkins became second in command of Confederate troops under Gen. Wise in 1861. His paternal home was on Gauley Mountain.

Col. Tompkins constructed the first railroad in Kanawha, a small track that ran from the mines to the Kanawha

river. The coal was taken to a plant in Charleston near the Elk river and refined. About 1875 the Paint Creek mine caught fire and was abandoned. Col. Tompkins was ruined by the war and died in Richmond. His fine home on Gauley Mountain was burned by Yankee soldiers about 1862.

Nothing can be told in this article regarding the Kanawha Cannel Coal & Oil Co., whose factory was located in Charleston. There were cannel coal mines up Elk river that shipped coal by water to this plant.

At Cannelton the Tatnall company known as the Union Coal & Oil Co., sold out to the Jos. C. Lea Company which shipped cannel coal east via the new Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, where the fuel was used in cities to make artificial gas. Richmond used cannel and bituminous coals mixed for illumination. Another rich seam was discovered at Smithers in the early 90's and some cannel coal was shipped over the K & M Railway for a time. But the discovery of petroleum had sounded the death knell of the cannel coal industry. Demand slowed down and finally died.

Today the production of cannel coal is a vanished industry. There is plenty still underground in the upper Kanawha mountains but no one wants it. In the days of the horse drawn fire wagons cannel coal was valuable in getting up steam quickly in the steam pumpers and for lamps on railway coaches and lanterns and headlights. When the government locks were being constructed on Kanawha great iron baskets of burning cannel made glowing flambeaus to illuminate the work for night shifts. Altogether it was wonderful stuff. Today it is useless.

Oil killed the cannel coal business just as it has helped ruin the bituminous coal industry today. History is repeating itself.

If the old wildcatter, plunger and gentleman sport, Col. Aaron Stockton was alive he could join another wrong guesser, Jawn L. Lewis, in saying

"Well, Dad Burnitt!"

The old depot is sitting beside the railroad spring sunshine. Its windows are long been nailed shut.

Most of the brick has been removed and from the cracks of the Stripes and sparrows are exchanging caves and holes lie around the door.

In the dingy office checks the shipment of boxes in occasional cases. The blackboard telegraph instruments moved when the last train rolled around the station.

On a pane of the trough which the telegraph the truck platform outside, a long-looking document is all and sundry that company will, on a report permission from the Service Commission.

Lower Loss of revenues where the off of the there must be made it is

of her, I am to make good the \$200 to the said Middleton according to the aforesaid agreement."

HIRAM HILL, first clerk of court in Fayette County, was appointed to that position when the county was organized in 1831. He served in the House of Burgesses of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia a number of times, representing a district embracing Fayette and Nicholas counties.

When Hill died in November, 1879, he was buried in the Poteet Cemetery at Hilltop, near Glen Jean, but on July 17, 1959, his remains were exhumed and reinterred in High Lawn Memorial Park, Oak Hill.

At the reburial on July 18, 1959, I conducted graveside rites in compliance with the request of his descendants. Claude R. (Bud) Hill Jr., Fayetteville attorney and Oak Hill banker, is a great-grandson of Hill.

OLD-TIME SINGING SCHOOL IS NOW PASSE

An institution that seems to have become passe in recent decades is the old-time singing schools.

These classes in the study of music were taught by itinerant men who were commonly addressed as "Professor."

They knew the rudiments of music and, as a rule, were generally good singers. All I ever knew were advocates of the shaped notes in music, notes that the round notes school-of-thought derisively spoke of as "buckwheat grain" notes.

Those old-time singing schools came to mind the other day when Mrs. Elizabeth Settle Elmore of Elkview brought a copy of a book of music that was used in the singing schools. This yellowed old volume is entitled *Hours of Song*, and was put out by James H. Fillmore and published in 1875. This particular copy, autographed by Fillmore, was signed by him in April, 1875.

However, one who bought this book affixed his name on the front flyleaf as follows: "James W. Sims, his book, Sept. 1, 1895."

GIVING YOU AN idea of how most songs are short-lived, of the hundred or so appearing in this book, only two are known to me today — "America" and "Onward Christian Soldiers."

Many of the others have gone down the drain of time. This book of song was made to be placed on the old organ in the parlor of the home. It opens long-ways, as we say and when it is spread open it measures two feet in length.

Some of the songs it contains have a rural background and fills with nostalgia those of us who grew up on the family farm.

ONE NUMBER in this Fillmore book is entitled "The Old Barn." My guess is that not a single reader of this column today has ever heard "The Old Barn" song but here are the words:

"Rickety, old crazy, shingleless, lacking some doors,
Bad in the upper story, wanting some boards on the floors;
How the winds turned around it, winds of a dark stormy day,
Blowing and scatt'ring the hayseed, whisking the straws away.
I sat for hours this summer, upon the threshold so gray,
And saw the cows in the pasture, take up their lazy paced way.
"Beams are strung rich and cobwebs, ridgepole is yellow and gray,
Seemingly hanging so helpless, over the mows of rich hay.
Then streaming in at the crannies, spreading the sweet clover smell,
Changing the dark, dismal granary into a flowery dell.
Lambs as snow-white as the daisies, frolicked from hill to tarn,
Or fell asleep in the shadows, made by the 'clever' old barn."

HOW MUCH MUSIC there was and rhythm in that antique composition is a good question. I know one such old barn, the one back on the ancestral acres.

When it was proposed to tear it down recently there came considerable opposition. The argument ran that it is an artist's dream and it should stand as is until the wind and the gale level it.

Although not one of the Bohemian set, I gave orders to let it remain like it is, an architectural relic that is antique no end.

"BELLING" NEWLYWEDS ONCE POPULAR FUN

An old country bit of horse play was brought up in memory the other day when one in a group told of planning to "bell" a couple who got married recently. Another word for "belling" a newly-married pair is called "serenading" them.

In more leisurely times, when entertainment and things to do were not as much in abundance as they are today, the matter of serenading newlyweds was quite the thing. My first introduction to the custom of serenading a couple came when I was but a broth of a boy.

A man well along in middle life married a lady of about the same vintage. Both of them were well known in the community and well liked. When word got out that the two had returned from a short wedding trip and were going to spend the night at the home of a relative, a serenading party was organized.

CHAPTER II.

THE MOUND BUILDERS AND INDIANS OF WEST VIRGINIA.

Prehistoric Time—Continued.

1. The First Inhabitants of West Virginia.—
Before entering upon the study of the history of our



WAWMUTH MOUND AT MOUNDSVILLE.*

*This Mound is one of the greatest prehistoric monuments in America. It is 245 feet in diameter at the base; 79 feet in height, with apex flat and 50 feet in diameter. The first white man who saw it, so far as known, was Joseph Tomlinson, who built his cabin near it in 1776. Soon after, while hunting, he came upon a strange looking hill rising abruptly from the level plain. Proceeding to his cabin, he returned with his wife and the two made

State, it is proper that we make inquiry regarding the people who dwelt here before the coming of white



SCULPTURED STONE, FOUND IN
MOUND AT MOUNDSVILLE.†

men. Who the first inhabitants were we do not know, for all the ages through which the New World passed, prior to its discovery by Columbus, are destitute of history and chronology. But that a race, now called Mound Build-

ers, far superior to the Indians, once existed on this continent, there can be not the least doubt. From the Atlantic on the east, to the Pacific on the west, and from the Great Lakes on the north to the Gulf

the ascent where they stood upon the summit—the first English speaking people on the top of this, one of the greatest mounds on the continent; from that day to this it has stood the wonder of all beholders, and such, if not destroyed by the hand of man, it will continue to be through centuries to come. The Mound was opened in 1838, a tunnel ten feet wide and seven feet high being made along the natural surface to the center (a distance of 111 feet) to a vault. Then a shaft was sunk from the apex to connect with the tunnel. Two large vaults were discovered which contained human skeletons, copper rings, bracelets, plates of mica, ivory beads and ornaments. Within two feet of one of the skeletons was found the Inscribed Stone.

†This stone was found in the Mammoth Mound in 1838. The inscription is in unknown characters, resembling those used by the Scandinavian pirates before the introduction of the Roman alphabet. It has never been deciphered and nothing like it has ever been found in America. It has attracted more attention